THE DAILY CLIPS

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'Dance 2010'

ECU production boasts a variety of styles, steps

The Daily Reflector

Students enrolled in East Carolina University's School of Theatre and Dance are quite literally kept on their toes. They will present 'Dance 2010' today-Tuesday in McGinnis Theatre.

The production includes eight dances in a variety of styles and a 10-minute intermission.

Tommi Overcash Galaska's "Zephyr Vivant" is a jazz piece inspired by 1920s illustrator Maxfield Parrish's prints.

John Dixon choreographed "Arc: Echo: Fall."


Patricia Week's piece, "Definitions I," is an investigation of self-awareness, self-doubt and self-discovery. The solo sections are inspired by Butoh, a nontraditional form of Japanese dance theater that developed in the 1960s as a reaction to the Hiroshima bombings. Lighting designer Steve Crick created lighting that is an integral element by highlighting or distorting images, by making figures appear and disappear.

"The Show Must Go On," by Galina Panova, is a ballet inspired by the Greek goddess of dance, Terpsichore, whose name comes from the Greek words for "delight" and "dance."

"Crossing the Mid-Line," by Dawn Clark, is based on an exploration of the relationships between mothers and daughters with emphasis on the renewing cycle of reincarnation.

"Anugraha" — Sankrit for grace and emancipation — is by Teal Darkenwald. The title is typically used as the name for a traditional Indian dance performance. In this case, "Anugraha" is a fusion of American jazz and classical Indian dance.

The final piece in Dance 2010 is the tap dance "Traditions in Time," by guest artist Lane Alexander, co-founder and director of Chicago Human Rhythm Project. It is a suite of five short works including many American tap-dance traditions.

IF YOU GO!

What: Dance 2010
When: 8 p.m. today-Tuesday, except Sunday when the show is at 2 p.m.
Where: McGinnis Theatre
Cost: $8-$12
Call: 328-6829
Online: www.ecarts.com
SPORTS

Hudson should have been considered for ECU job

Had a solid background

Published: Friday, January 29, 2010 2:18 AM EST

Commentary by BRIAN HAINES
Sports Writer

GREENVILLE – Last Friday morning East Carolina University officially announced that former Texas Tech defensive coordinator Ruffin McNeill would be Skip Holtz’s successor.

The 51-year old McNeill served as an assistant on Mike Leach’s staff for 10 years, and was the defensive coordinator for the Red Raiders the last two seasons. McNeill also played defensive back for the Pirates from 1976-80, and was the team captain for two years.

East Carolina athletics director Terry Holland said he preferred to hire an established head coach with a lengthy resume but, with the timing of Holtz’s departure, the list of applicants shrank by the minute.

If the Pirates were going to roll the dice on a defensive assistant, they should have at least looked in their own backyard first.

Holtz wasn’t the only quality coach to head to Florida this season. Shortly before the popular skipper’s departure to USF, defensive coordinator Greg Hudson took a gig with Florida State as the Seminoles linebackers coach.

Hudson may not be an alum, but he’s been around since 2005 and has coached the team’s most successful unit in that time span.

Hudson has all the makings of a good coach. He has a fiery personality, he is only 42 years old, and has been coaching at the college level since 1990.

He has a brisk, but funny personality which at times has the potential to rub people the wrong way, but that doesn’t mean he would not have been a good fit.

That is not to say McNeill was a bad hire or should not have gotten the job. He did guide Texas Tech to the fifth-ranked defense in the offensive-heavy Big 12.

The level of interest on both Hudson’s side and East Carolina’s was hard to gauge since the hiring process began, but having Hudson come in for an interview would have benefited everyone involved.

From the Pirates standpoint, interviewing Hudson would have shown the fans that ECU gave a popular assistant a shot, and who knows, maybe he could have wowed in an interview the same way Holtz did. At the very least it would have been a tip of the cap to a person who has given the program five good years of work.
It also would have made sense for Hudson to want to come in and be interviewed. Being linked to the ECU position would have no doubt raised his profile.

Last Wednesday, Holland politely declined to comment on Hudson and the next day word got out that McNeill would be the new skipper.

Florida State football Sports Information Director Thomas Roberts said last week that the school could neither confirm or deny Hudson’s interest in the position. Roberts also added that the linebackers coach was out recruiting for the school at the time.

During the Pirates’ two Conference USA title-winning seasons, their defense has largely been considered the backbone of the team.

In 2005 East Carolina’s pass defense ranked in the top 20 in the country allowing 184.9 yards per game. In 2006 Hudson’s defense allowed a mere 20.8 points per game; in 2007 the Pirates forced 31 turnovers and finished the season ranking fourth nationally in plus/minus ratio, while in 2008 ECU was tops in total defense despite tons of injuries.

Just about every time one of those run-and-gun C-USA West team’s locked horns with the Pirates, ECU came out on top.

This season alone Hudson’s defense clinched victories by snuffing out last-minute rallies by Appalachian State, UCF, Southern Miss and Houston in the Conference USA title game. Not to mention a sound performance at the Liberty Bowl against Arkansas, to go along with stout efforts versus Virginia Tech this season and last season.

Hudson’s signature moment came in 2008, when the Pat White-led, eighth-ranked Mountaineers came into Greenville and got completely shut down in the Pirates 24-3 rout of West Virginia.

Hiring Hudson would have likely kept some of the current recruiting pipelines intact, and if former offensive coordinator Steve Shankwiler stayed on to run the offense, the move would have kept the current players from having to learn an entirely new system.

If that scenario were to take place, ECU would have entered next season having two coaches who were already extremely familiar with all the Conference USA opponents offenses and defenses.

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January 28, 2010

Investment Losses Cause Steep Dip in University Endowments, Study Finds

By TAMAR LEWIN

Reflecting the difficult financial environment for higher education, university endowments lost an average of 18.7 percent in the last fiscal year, the worst returns since the Great Depression, according to a study of hundreds of public and private institutions.

The study, by the National Association of College and University Business Officers and Commonfund, a nonprofit organization that manages university investments, also found that in the last year, many endowment managers increased the move from traditional fixed-income instruments and stocks into alternative investments like private equity, hedge funds, venture capital and private-equity real estate — all of which performed badly in fiscal 2009.

Unusually, the universities with endowments over $1 billion had the greatest decline, an average of 20.5 percent. Harvard, Yale and Stanford, the wealthiest universities, all lost more than 26 percent of their endowment values.

At the same time, the study found, debt rose, especially at the largest universities, and gifts declined.

The 2009 losses in endowment income come on top of an average loss of 3 percent in fiscal 2008. The three-year average return, which most universities use to determine how much of their assets to spend, was negative 2.5 percent, compared with the five-year average of 2.7 percent, and the 10-year average of 4 percent.

“We’ve had two bad years, so the endowment performance this year will go a long way to determine how quickly endowment spending will recover in the future,” said John S. Griswold Jr., executive director of the Commonfund Institute. “Most universities continue to spend at a healthy rate despite the large declines in their value.”

The study analyzed data from 842 institutions with a total of $306 billion in endowment assets.

In fiscal 2009, the universities, on average, spent 4.4 percent of their endowment assets, up from 4.3 percent the previous year. And the report found that 43 percent of the institutions had increased their spending rate during fiscal 2009, while 25 percent had decreased it, and 28 percent reported no change.

Because most universities calculate their spending based on quarterly endowment values over the previous three years, the percentage of the current assets being paid out rises as the asset values drop.

“Unless there’s a significant move in asset values, this is likely to go up over next few years, as the base goes
down," said Verne Sedlacek, president of the Commonfund.

Some members of Congress, notably Senator Charles E. Grassley, Republican of Iowa, have been putting pressure on universities with large endowments to help ensure college access by increasing their endowment spending and questioned why they are not required to pay out the same 5 percent a year as private foundations must to retain their tax-free status.

In response to the report, Mr. Grassley again raised the possibility of requiring universities to have the same payout rate as foundations, since both are allowed to accumulate money tax-free, and should be accountable for fulfilling charitable purposes.

"I hope colleges won’t rely on double-digit losses as a reason to raise tuition or freeze student aid," he said in a statement. "Many of them relied on some risky investments, like hedge funds, to get big gains in recent years, and now those strategies are causing losses. Students shouldn’t bear the brunt of colleges’ easy-come, easy-go investment strategy. A lot of colleges still have plenty of money in the bank."

On Wednesday in an interview, Mr. Griswold said the recent market problems illustrated why a required 5 percent payout might be problematic for universities.

"Even the most successful investors, over the long run, are averaging 6 percent, and that doesn’t take account of inflation," he said.

In fiscal 2009, 51 percent of endowment money was in alternative investments, which tend to be less liquid, compared with 46 percent the previous year.

Institutions with endowments greater than a billion dollars had 61 percent of their investments in such alternatives last year, compared with 52 percent the previous year. In contrast, universities with endowments under $25 million had only 13 percent of their assets in such investments, up from 11 percent the previous year.

John D. Walda, president of the National Association of College and University Business Officers, said Wednesday at a news conference that with a market recovery under way, the financial picture was improving. The real challenge for many universities will not be recovering endowment values, he said, but getting back public revenues.

"That is not a pattern that is likely to be anywhere near as swift as the market recovery," he said. "We think for our public institutions that rely on support from states, we’re several years off. The trough in state revenues usually occurs when unemployment hits its highest rate, and I’m not sure we’ve seen that yet."

Of the institutions in the study, 60 percent reported a decline in gifts last year, with a median decrease of 45.7 percent.

The average total long-term debt of the 654 survey participants that carried debt stood at $167.8 million as of June 30, 2009, compared with $109.1 million a year earlier, with the universities with the largest endowments doing the bulk of the borrowing.